

IN*

FREE
LIKE WE ALL
SHOULD BE

A COLLECTIVE VIEW
OF MODERN SOCIETY



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COMIC BOOK/'ZINE

INX NUMBER 15 CONTRIBUTORS

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| P. 1 COVER BY OMAC | P. 16 "MURDER BIRD"
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| P. 8 "INSANE EMPEROR PUTIN"
BY JERRY KIRK (JERRYKIRK.COM) | P. 18 "ON CICADAS AND THE MEANING
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| P. 10 CARTOONS BY HENRY EUDY
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| P. 10 "ALL LIVES MATTER" BY GREG
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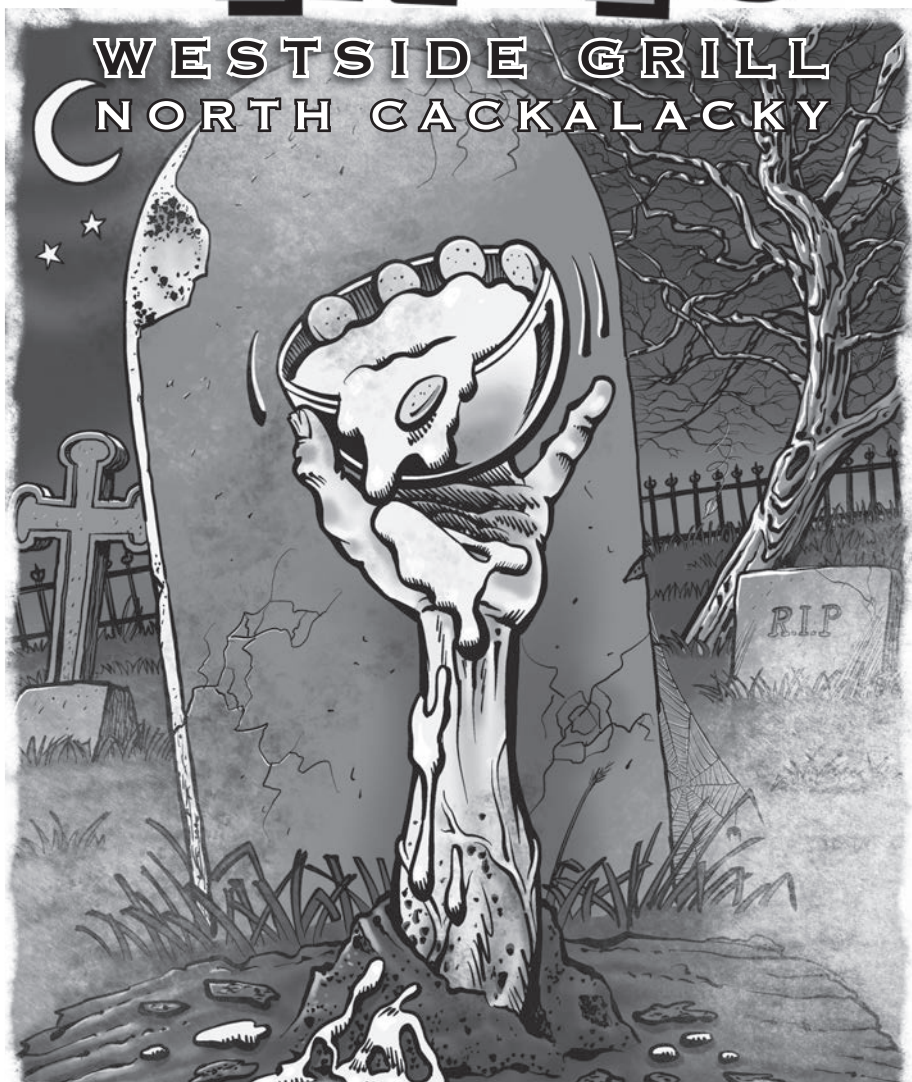
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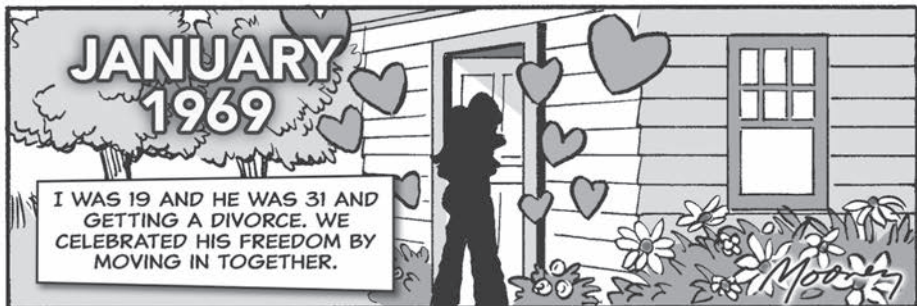
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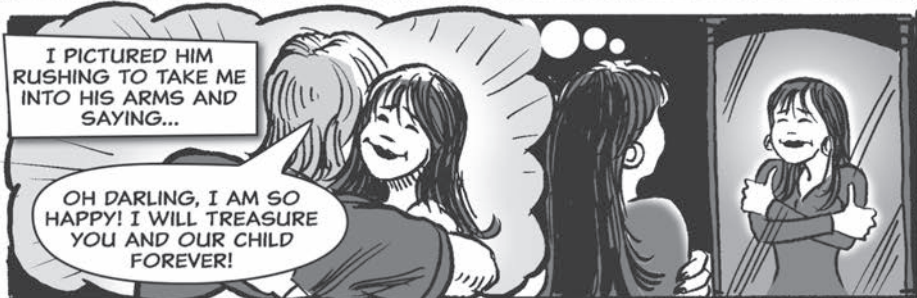
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ART: GERRY MOONEY

STORY: ANONYMOUS



I DROVE TO MY PARENTS' HOUSE
AND ASKED MOM IF I COULD
SPEND THE NIGHT.



SURE.



SHE COULD TELL I'D BEEN
CRYING BUT DIDN'T PRESS.

I THANKED HER AND WE
SAID GOODNIGHT.



I WAS HOPING HE WOULD
COME TO HIS SENSES BY
MORNING.

I HAD A NICE JOB IN A SMALL OFFICE
DOWNTOWN.



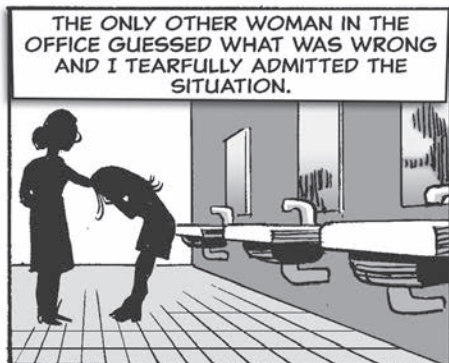
MY COWORKERS WERE
ALL OLDER THAN ME AND
HAD BEEN HAPPY WITH MY
WORK SINCE DAY ONE.

ALL VERY NICE PEOPLE, UNTIL I
THREW UP IN MY WASTEBASKET
THAT MORNING...

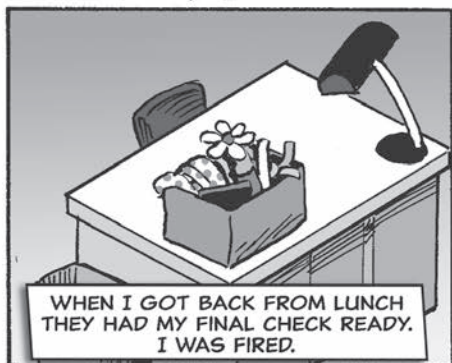


AND THEN FAINTED
WHILE TRYING TO
CLEAN IT UP.

THE ONLY OTHER WOMAN IN THE
OFFICE GUESSED WHAT WAS WRONG
AND I TEARFULLY ADMITTED THE
SITUATION.



WHEN I GOT BACK FROM LUNCH
THEY HAD MY FINAL CHECK READY.
I WAS FIRED.



I CASHED THE PAYCHECK (\$150 EVERY TWO WEEKS, LESS TAXES). THAT AND MY CLOTHES WERE ALL I HAD. SINCE DAD WAS OUT OF TOWN FOR THE WEEK, I KNEW MOM WOULD LET ME BUNK WITH HER FOR A FEW DAYS UNTIL I COULD FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO.

MOM CAME FLYING IN FROM HER SHIFT AT THE DINER...

WILL YOU PUT ON A POT OF SPAGHETTI WHILE I WASH UP? I'VE GOT TO PICK UP THE KIDS AT THE GYM!

WE'LL EAT WHEN WE GET BACK!

I USED MOM'S RECIPE AND PUT IT TO SIMMER, THEN SLAMMED SOME GARLIC BREAD IN THE OVEN AS SHE DROVE UP.

HI, KIDS!

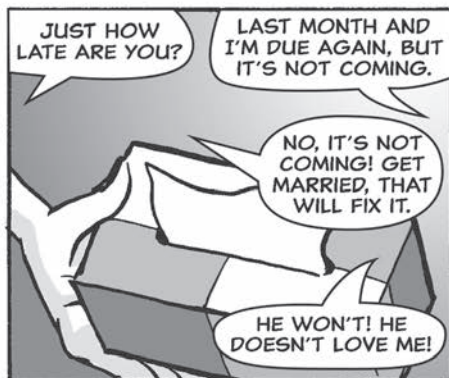
THAT SMELLS GOOD!

HI, SIS!

THE TABLE WAS SET; WE SAT DOWN, THE KIDS ATE IN UNDER TEN MINUTES.

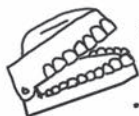
THEY WENT OUT TO SHOOT BASKETS, MOM AND I PUT THE KITCHEN BACK IN ORDER.

WE TOOK OUR PEPSI'S AND OUR CIGARETTES AND WENT INTO THE DEN.





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Ha!
Ha!



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SOMETIMES I'LL NOTICE THAT I'M BEING FOLLOWED BY SOMEONE FROM HIGH SCHOOL OR AN OLD JOB AND STUFF.



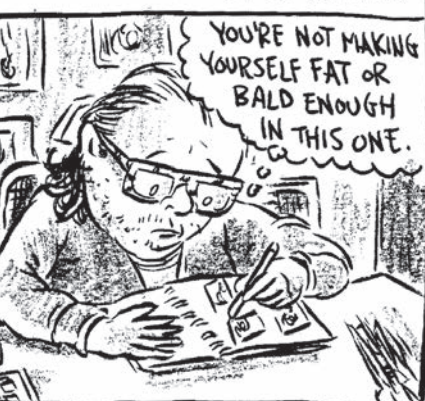
WHEN I LOOK AT THEIR PHOTOS, THEY ARE ALWAYS SOMEWHERE SUNNY, SMILING WITH CHILDREN AND DOGS.



IT ALL SEEMS DESIGNED TO SHOW HOW HEALTHY, HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL AT LIFE THEY ALL ARE.



BUT DEEP INSIDE, I HOPE THEY ARE JUST AS MESS'D UP AS ME.



ALL LIVES MATTER

(OR THE EVOLUTION OF MAN)
by GREG RUSSELL



I THOUGHT OF YOU YESTERDAY WHILE
LISTENING TO RECORDS.



THE SONGS REMINDED ME OF A
TIME WE SPENT TOGETHER THAT
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND.



THERE'S SO MUCH I STILL DON'T
UNDERSTAND ABOUT YOU. I'VE
THOUGHT ABOUT TRYING TO FIGURE
IT OUT BY MAKING A COMIC.



BUT IT'S BEEN SO LONG. I DON'T
HAVE ANY PHOTOS OF YOU. I DON'T
KNOW IF I REMEMBER WHAT YOU
LOOKED LIKE. HOW YOU WORE
YOUR HAIR.

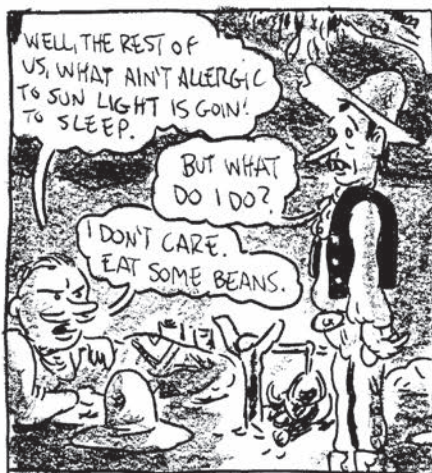


I HAD TO LOOK UP HOW LONG
YOU'VE BEEN GONE. IT WILL BE
20 YEARS THIS AUGUST.



I STILL DON'T KNOW IF IT WAS AN
ACCIDENT OR YOU LEFT ON PURPOSE.

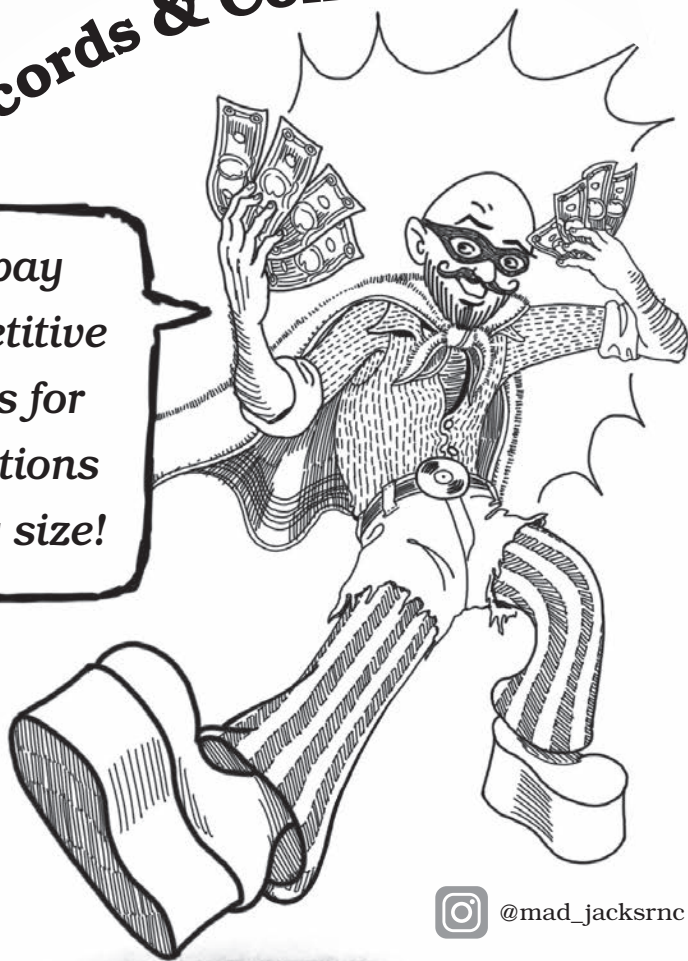




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BOB WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN.



Flew off
Like a murder bird
Took my sunshine
Without a word
Ferried off
In the great big blue
Silently
As if he knew

THE MORGS

by @stencilspray
vol.5



Francis, do
you have our
submission
ready for in*?

I don't feel
like making a
comic.



Why not?

Because the world is
a dumpster fire and
making comics
seems trivial right
now.



I feel helpless.
I certainly don't
feel like being funny.
And maybe I feel like
people shouldn't be
laughing.



Francis!
You *HAVE* to write
the comic.
If you stop writing
the comic,
we stop existing.
It may be trivial,
it may be a waste of time,
but it's *all we've got!*



I just feel like--

Shut it! I'm not going to stop
existing so you can wallow.
Shit sucks.
Now
Write the damn
comic



What?

*maybe you
write the comic
once in a while*



nothing.

ON CICADAS

AND THE MEANING OF HOME

I've lived in a lot of places in my life.

I was born just outside of Saint Louis, MO, and spent most of my life wandering around my home state of Missouri. I spent quite a few nights in the backwoods of the Ozarks, listening to the cicada's call.

DOG-DAY
CICADA

I left in 2018, a couple years after coming out as trans. There was nothing left for me there.

It had never felt safe,
and it kept getting worse.

The hardest part of being queer and from a place like Missouri is that there's nowhere quite like it. Missouri is directly on the top of the Ozark mountain range, and most of my life was spent in the rural areas surrounding the I-70 corridor.

GASCONADE RIVER.
MT. STERLING,
MO.



What this means is that, when you eventually leave, you'll never find a place that feels like the closest thing to home you ever knew, and knowing that the "home" you came from never wanted a queer like you will haunt you wherever you go.

I've travelled pretty extensively. I've lived in a van in New England, I've driven semitrucks through the South and over the Sierra Nevadas, I've worked the line in restaurants from Maine to Colorado.



PIN OAK
TREE
LEAVES

There's not a single place I've lived that feels like the Ozarks. The mountains aren't my rolling hills. The trees are pine, not pin oak. The stars I slept under are washed away in street lights and ambient visual noise. The rent is too high. The cicadas don't sing.

Missouri isn't going to be any more welcoming any time soon, especially if the Hawleys and Greitens have their way. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't go back. I was never going to have a home there, and if things keep going the way they're going I'm not sure where in this country someone like me could ever have one.



I'm planning on moving
again next year.

I'm still not sure
where I'm going to go.

SKYLINE,
ST. LOUIS,
MO.

Wherever it is,

it won't be home.

Sarah A. P. 2/22



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Why?

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JUST THAT THE
IMPLAUSIBLE WILL
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j.e. pitlman



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Watching Me Sleep

BY J.E. PITTMAN
ILLUSTRATED BY BILL SAYER

THE MONSTER WATCHED SLUMPLY FROM THE FOOT OF THE BED, JAWS DRIPPING WITH THE GREEN ICHOR SQUIRTING OUT OF THE BLUME-SPRITE IT SNAPPED FROM HIS DREAM.

A DREAM UNKIND TO HIS MIND. A NIGHTMARE IF SUCH THINGS REALLY EXISTED — FOR A DREAM IS A DREAM REGARDLESS OF ONE'S PERCEPTION OF IT.

MANY DEBATE THAT POINT — THE INHERENT NATURE OF DREAMS AND THEIR TENDENCY TO BLISS, BAD, GOOD, WET, TERROR, OR PROPHECY — BUT THE MONSTER (OR SO HE STYLED HIMSELF WITH THE GLOWING EYES AND SHADOWY COUNTEenance AND FANGS FROM WHICH THE ICHOR DRIPPED) KNEW DIFFERENTLY. HAD TASTED DIFFERENTLY. EVER SINCE THIS MAN WAS A CHILD, HE HAD BEEN PLAGUED BY DREAMS OF THE UNKIND SORT.

NIGHT TERRORS. TASTY TASTY.
TERRORS TONIGHT.



THE M̄FULK RAN ITS TONGUE OVER THE FANGS, LICKING THE ICHOR CLEAN.

EACH SORT OF DREAM HAD A DIFFERENT TASTE TO HIM AND THE ONE HE WATCHED PROVIDED HIM WITH SUCH SUMPTUOUS VARIETY HE WAS GLAD HE NEVER ATE THE CHILD'S MIND — WHEN A CHILD HE HAD BEEN — OR NIBBLED HIS TOES FROM THE EDGE OF THE BED OR SKULKED FROM THE SHADOWY CLOSET BREATHING HUSKY NOISE OR ANY OF THE OTHER TACTICS HIS BROTHERS USED.

NO, THIS MONSTER UNDER THE BED HAD BEEN BEFRIENDED BY THE CHILD-NOW-MAN.

THE CHILD HAD NEVER BEEN SCARED OF HIM THOUGH HE WAS QUITE SCARY.

"YOU'RE NOT SCARY, FULK," THE CHILD HAD SAID. "IN HERE'S SCARY." THE LITTLE HUMAN CHILD POINTED TO HIS HEAD.

INTRIGUED, THE M̄FULK — FULK AS THE CHILD HAD CALLED HIM — DIPPED HIS CLAW INTO THE MIND OF THE CHILD — LANCING THE FOUL FESTERING — AND REGRETTED IT IMMEDIATELY.

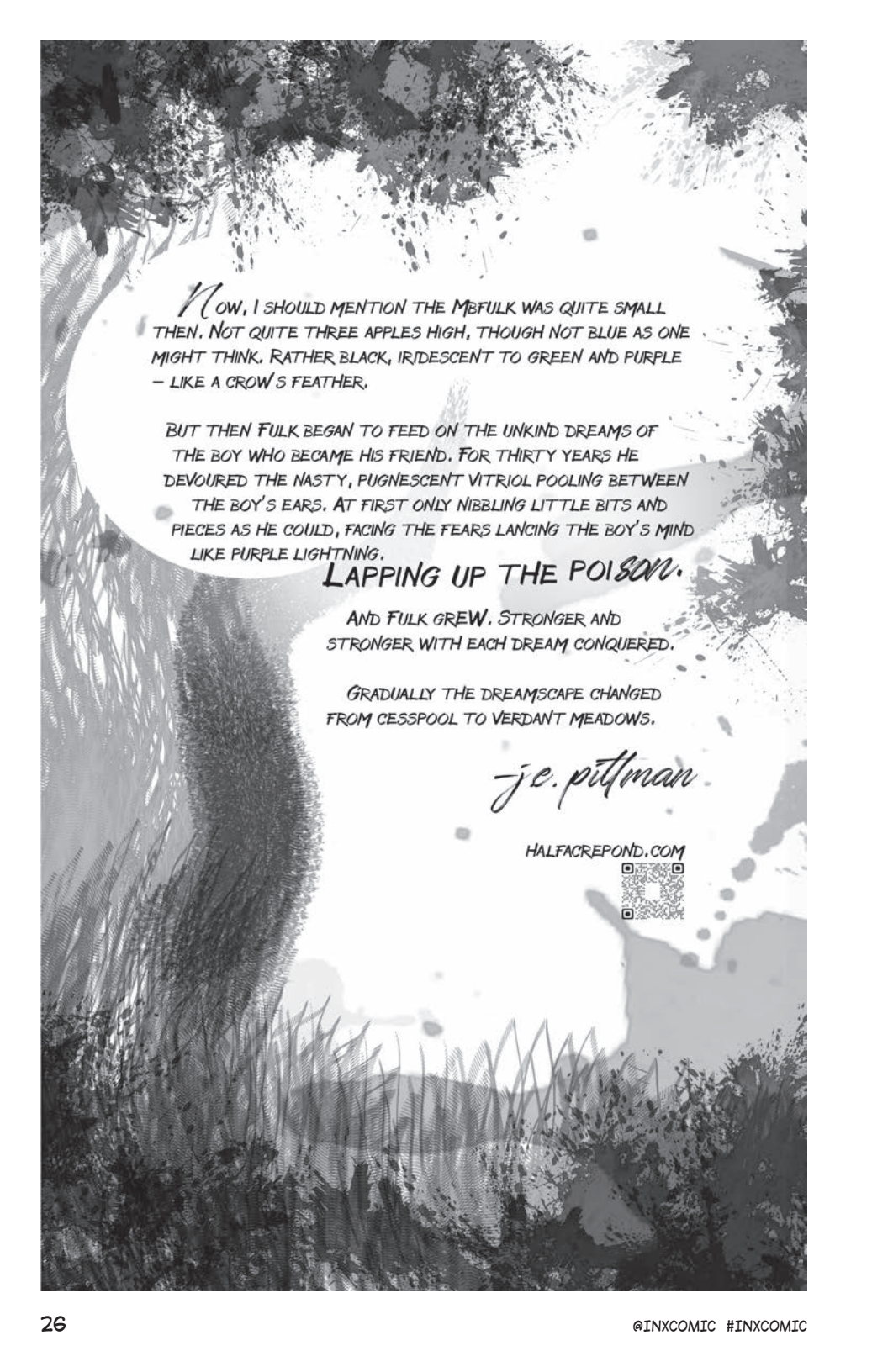
THE CHILD MUST HAVE A SOUL OF STEEL FOR ONE NOT YET BLED FOR FULK CRIED OUT AS HIS THREE HEARTS LURCHED AT THE SCENE BEFORE HIS MIND, TEARS IN THE MONSTER'S GLOWING EYE IN SYMPATHY FOR THIS BOY.

"SMALL WONDER YOU DO NOT FEAR TO STEP THE SHADOWS AND FALL THROUGH THE WORLD."

"NO, I WISH I WOULD." THE CHILD CRIED AND WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES, "WOULD YOU EAT ME FULK?"

A LITTLE HARMLESS CHILDHOOD TERROR WAS ALL THE FULK WAS AFTER, THE OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION RIPE FOR FUN WITHOUT LASTING HARM.

NOT THIS
desolation.



Now, I SHOULD MENTION THE M^BFULK WAS QUITE SMALL THEN. NOT QUITE THREE APPLES HIGH, THOUGH NOT BLUE AS ONE MIGHT THINK. RATHER BLACK, IRIDESCENT TO GREEN AND PURPLE — LIKE A CROW'S FEATHER.

BUT THEN FULK BEGAN TO FEED ON THE UNKIND DREAMS OF THE BOY WHO BECAME HIS FRIEND. FOR THIRTY YEARS HE DEVoured THE NASTY, PUGNESCENT VITRIOL POOLING BETWEEN THE BOY'S EARS. AT FIRST ONLY NIBBLING LITTLE BITS AND PIECES AS HE COULD, FACING THE FEARS LANCING THE BOY'S MIND LIKE PURPLE LIGHTNING.

LAPPING UP THE POISON.

AND FULK GREW. STRONGER AND STRONGER WITH EACH DREAM CONQUERED.

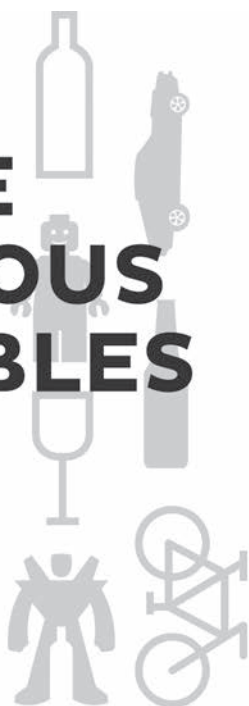
GRADUALLY THE DREAMSCAPE CHANGED FROM CESSPOOL TO VERDANT MEADOWS.

j.e. pitlman

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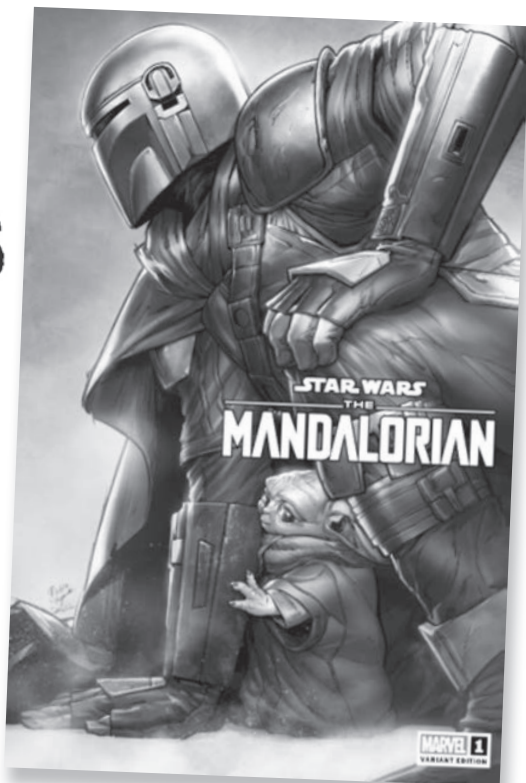
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